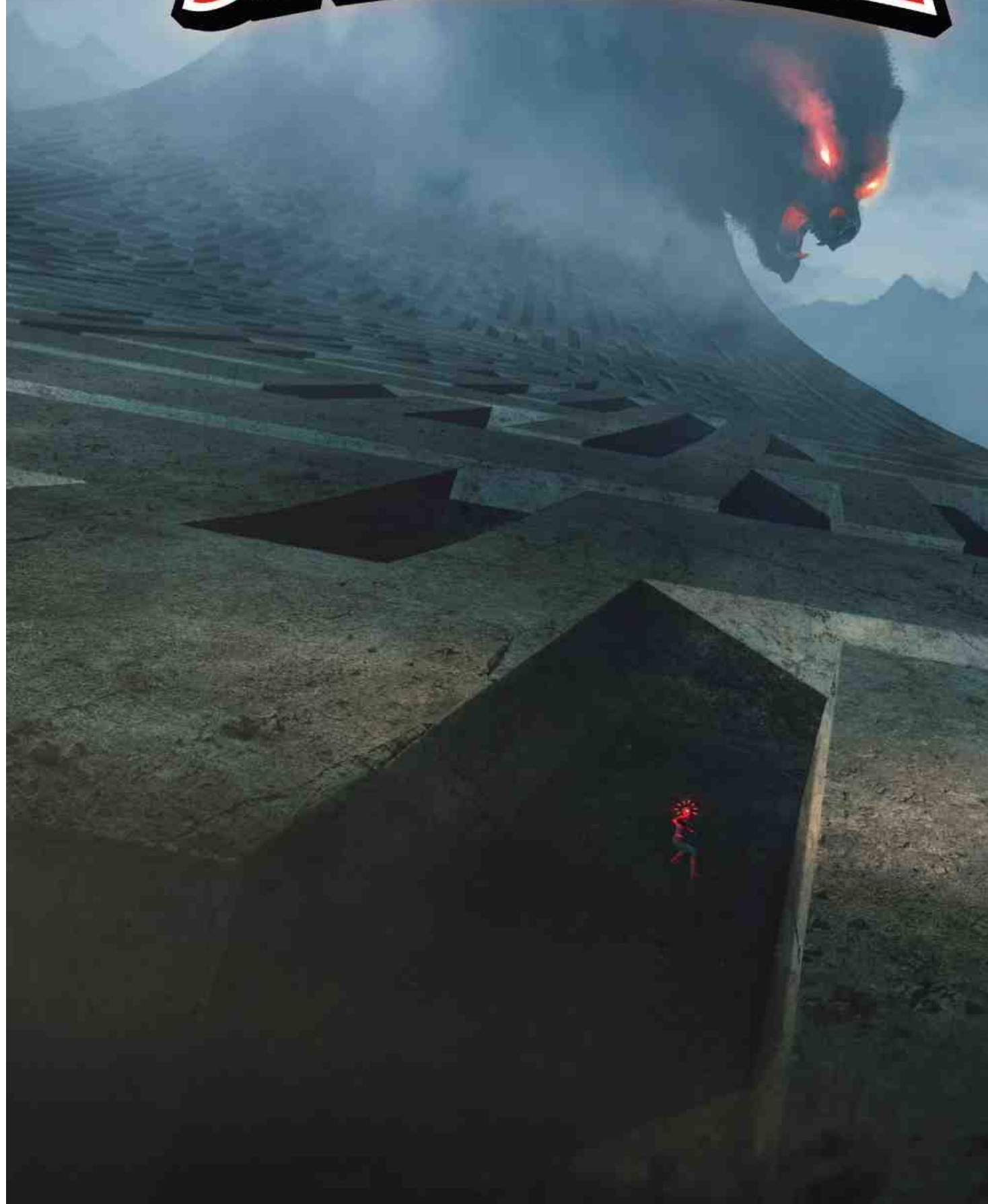


MARVEL

2

TABOO
B. EARL
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DEADLY NEIGHBORHOOD **SPIDER-MAN**



PETER PARKER HAS THE PROPORTIONAL SPEED, STRENGTH, AND AGILITY OF A SPIDER, ADHESIVE FINGERTIPS AND TOES, AND THE UNIQUE PRECOGNITIVE AWARENESS OF DANGER CALLED "SPIDER-SENSE"! AFTER THE TRAGIC DEATH OF HIS UNCLE BEN, PETER UNDERSTOOD THAT WITH GREAT POWER THERE MUST ALSO COME GREAT RESPONSIBILITY AND BECAME THE CRIMEFIGHTING SUPER HERO CALLED THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN!

DEADLY NEIGHBORHOOD SPIDER-MAN

Peter Parker traveled to Los Angeles to conduct experiments with scientist **Crystal Catawnee**. But terrifying nightmares have afflicted him since coming into contact with an ancient **magical rock**. At first, they just seemed like a string of bad dreams filled with strange monsters, mazes, and a flame-eyed version of Spidey, but something sinister is afoot because the barrier between the conscious and subconscious just came crashing down—when a giant **DEMON BEAR** ripped straight out of Spidey's nightmares attacked Peter and Crystal at their lab!

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CRYSTAL ECHOHAWK
& BIRD RUNNINGWATER

SPIDER-MAN CREATED BY
STAN LEE & STEVE DITKO

**NORTH DAKOTA,
TWENTY YEARS AGO.**

One more
story, Grandpa...
please!

And that
is how we
have Coyote
hanging on
the wall.

But
Coyote will
be puffing back
up soon to go
hunt in the night,
so better hurry
off to bed, little
one, before
he does and
thinks you're
a night
snack!

Grandpa!
Don't be
ridiculous.

Okay, this is the last
one and then off to
bed. Your momma
won't be happy
if you're cranky
in the morning
when she picks
you up.

I'm
too old
to believe
that anymore.
But I hope
one day I
can give my
blanket to Iya.

Yes. Remember,
Iya is our Mother
in every rock and branch.
We must care for Her and
not steal from Her.

One day...

Coyote was walking with his friend Iktomi. They spotted a rock with spidery lines of green moss. This rock was named Iya. It wasn't just any rock but one that had great power. Coyote felt this power.

Coyote said:

This is a
nice-looking rock. I
think it has power. I will
give it my blanket so
it will not be cold.

After giving
Iya the blanket,
Coyote and Iktomi
continued
on their journey.
Unfortunately,
it began to snow
and the two
took shelter
in a cave.

Iktomi was warm in
his buffalo cloak, but
Coyote was freezing. He
asked Iktomi to go back
to Iya and get his blanket.

Iktomi
asked Iya
kindly, but
Iya refused.

No. I
like it, and
what is given
is given.

Coyote
knew he
wasn't
getting
his blanket
back, so he
stole it from
Iya and
ran away.

Iktomi
followed
him.

Iya was not happy
about Coyote's trickery
and gave chase.

Iya had great power
inside and smashed
through everything in
its way until it smashed
right over Coyote.

Coyote was
flattened and Iya
took back its
blanket, rolling
Coyote into
a pancake.

Coyote
was cold and
soaked to
the bone.

"And when we give our gifts, we must always give them with gratitude--otherwise, she will come back with great fire and fury."



Okay, big guy. I have a pretty good feeling you're the one behind all these shenanigans. And I don't like it.

I'm tired of being tired, Winnie, and I promise ya I don't have any honey.

So cut me a break and go back to whatever nightmare cave you crawled out of...

...because me and my friend here need to finish up our experiment so we can save the world.



Turns out this **Demon Bear** doesn't talk in an actual spoken "language." My mind floods with images and patterns that decode and recode into a cohesive conversation.

It's like I'm having an entire dialogue using emojis...but with a million more characters than any smartphone keyboard ever could have. Makes me wonder if this is how Prof. X reads minds?

Demon Bear tells me we woke it with our **experiments** when we weakened the junction between **its world** and the **real world**. The psychic sickness in our world is so intense, Demon Bear needed to feed after its long hibernation. Which is why Mr. Toad's Wild Ride has come alive.

I tell Demon Bear I will do whatever I can to stop the nightmare realm from entering our world.

Awesome.

On the bright side, I never would have to wonder what it would be like to take a bad trip.

Demon Bear says the Rock is its beating heart.

If I listen to the Rock, it will guide me.

I have one last question for Demon Bear. Where is the Maze?

Demon Bear tells me to look for the patterns and follow the spirals. And the **rock**? I ask.

Demon Bear tells me that if I lose, the nightmares will break free and infect our reality.

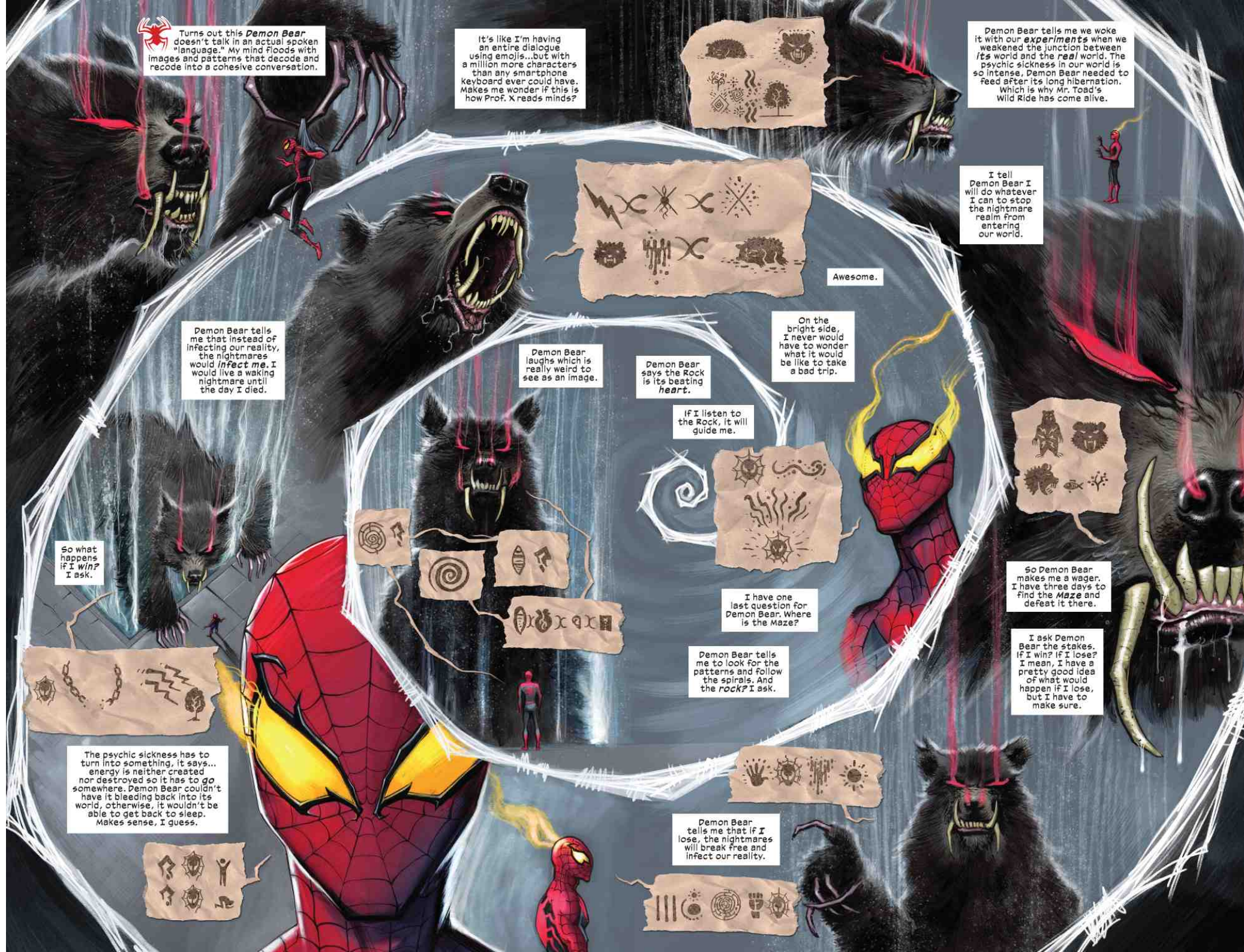
Demon Bear tells me that instead of infecting our reality, the nightmares would **infect me**. I would live a waking nightmare until the day I died.

So what happens if I win? I ask.

So Demon Bear makes me a wager. I have three days to find the **Maze** and defeat it there.

I ask Demon Bear the stakes. If I win? If I lose? I mean, I have a pretty good idea of what would happen if I lose, but I have to make sure.

The psychic sickness has to turn into something, it says... energy is neither created nor destroyed so it has to go somewhere. Demon Bear couldn't have it bleeding back into its world, otherwise, it wouldn't be able to get back to sleep. Makes sense, I guess.





And then it's like it never happened.

Damn. I really thought that was going to be the one.



Sometimes everything seems perfect and then--blammo--turns out she chews with her mouth open. I'm sure you've had to deal with a guy who leaves the toilet seat up...



...and when you gotta go in the middle of the night and you're about to sit down--

Always have an answer for everything, don't ya, Petey? I'm starving, annoyed and if I don't eat something soon, I'm gonna turn into a midnight gremlin.



To your favorite late-night diner?

After all these late nights and another dud, the only thing that'll make it better is a peanut butter and strawberry **Mighty Maxine's** milkshake.



That's exactly why I drink all that coffee...so I can be up until 6 a.m.

And I don't know how you can drink coffee and not be up until 6 a.m.

I like the taste. And I would have to down a pot to stay up all night. A cup or two-- I'm good to go.

MIGHTY MAXINE'S ALL-NIGHT DINER, 6 A.M.







Yeah,
I'm seeing
this.

But
I'm not sure
I understand
exactly what's
happening.

What if I
told you we woke
up some sort of
Demon Bear?

There are *stories* about a
Demon Bear and nightmares that my
Grandpa used to tell me. Warnings and
such. But I always believed they
were just metaphors.

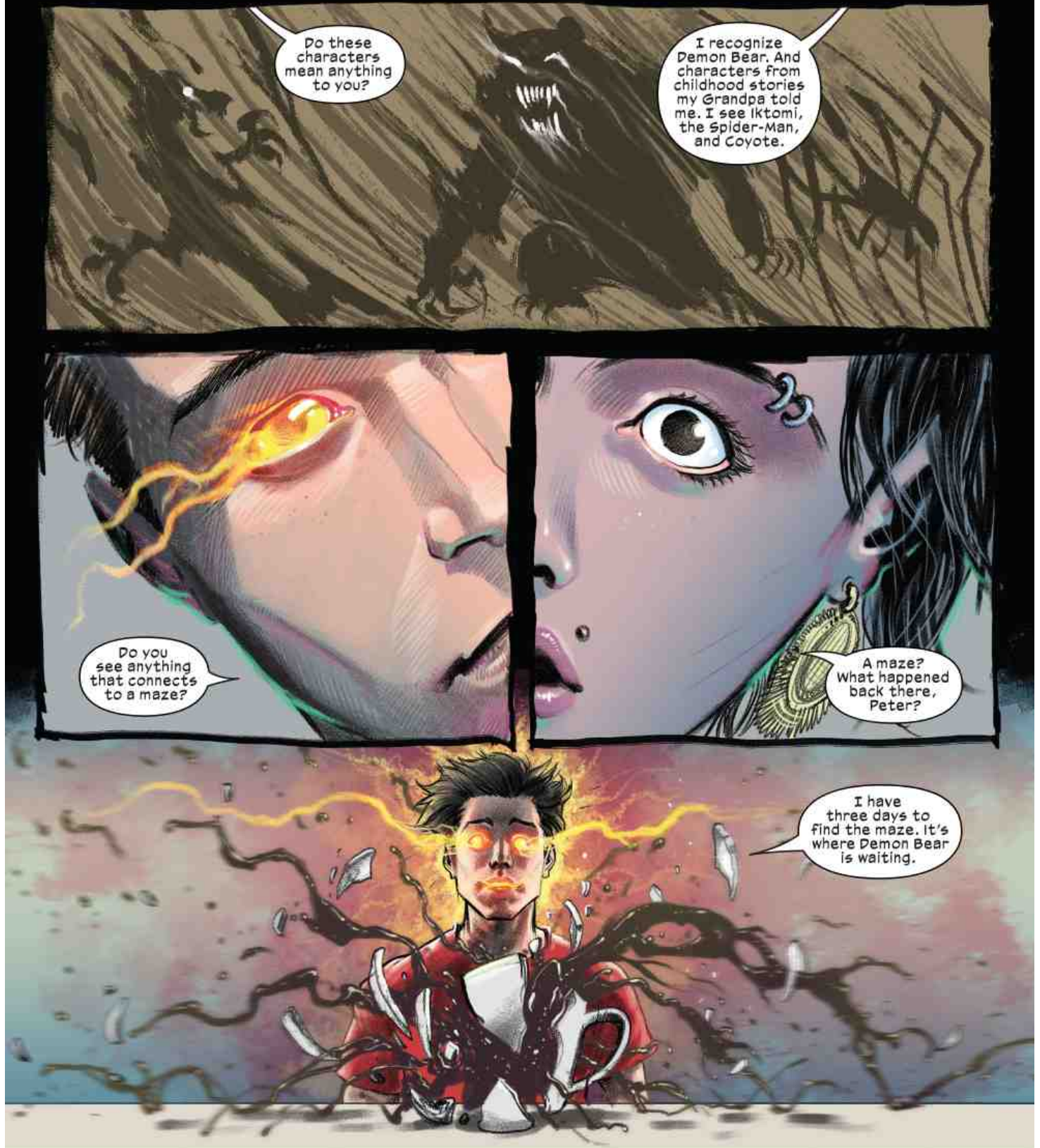
I don't think
they were *only*
metaphors.

This is *insane*.
We are both seeing
strange creatures
dancing in the
coffee, right?

Yep. Unless
someone slipped
something into your
shake and my java, I'd
say we are *between*
dimensions.

The
connective
junction between
the two nodes.

Exactly.



Do these characters mean anything to you?

I recognize Demon Bear. And characters from childhood stories my Grandpa told me. I see Iktomi, the Spider-Man, and Coyote.

Do you see anything that connects to a maze?

A maze? What happened back there, Peter?

I have three days to find the maze. It's where Demon Bear is waiting.



Waiting? Waiting for you? To do what?

Uh, find him, and... not sure why me, but demon bear told me I gotta defeat it somehow, and if I don't...

"...Everyone's nightmares become reality."

CRYSTAL'S HOUSE, PASADENA.

I love seeing where all the craziness came from.

I have similar notebooks. Places where I'll write the most bizarre ideas, but there are always kernels that turn into something else.

Ha! You were even trying to connect in the summing of three cubes. And I love this *Hitchhiker's Guide* reference. It's sort of interesting, actually. Back in 2019, the equation was finally solved and...

...you're passed out.

Huh. Did you use these in your initial equations?

$X = 8053873331257599, Y = 83485753145314531751440 Z = 1265212377335631$

I fight sleep, but these numbers are a lullaby for my brain.

The last thing I remember is thinking that maybe it's all just one giant cosmic joke.



I slept like a rock.



No dreams. And speaking of *rocks*...



What the...? How did you get here, my friend?

Crystal left a note. "Be back soon!" Hmmm. A bit cryptic. Something feels off, especially with the sudden appearance of the rock. I'd better call an expert.



Wong? Yeah, I need some advice. Actually, I need some help.



5 A.M. FRIDAY
MORNING
COMMUTE.

I could
have had
Duncan
drive me.



But I felt bad making
him schlep from
Malibu to Pasadena
then back down to DTLA.



Quick hour-
plus ride on Bus
66 and--bam--
now I can get
back to some
web-slinging!



I think I
recognize the
area, but I'm
still a total
L.A. noob.



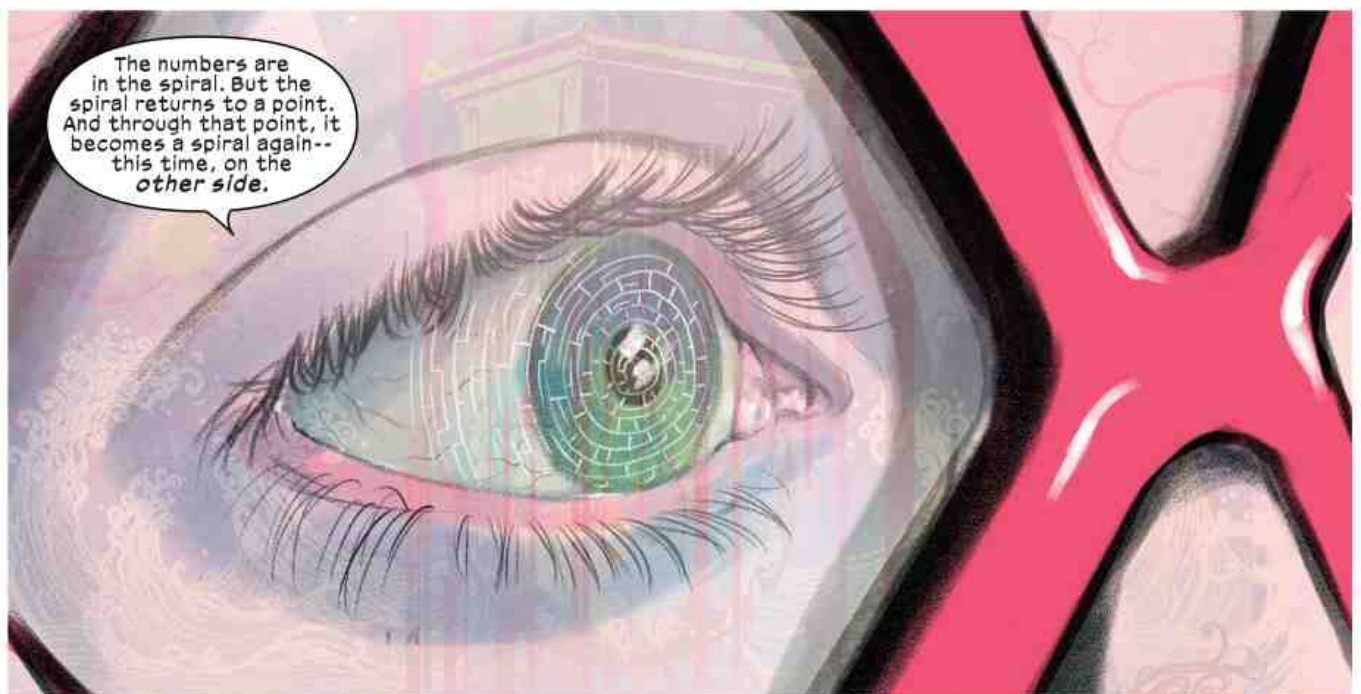
Why is it
always in a
dark alley?



And why
are there
always
goons?

Hello, my
well-dressed
morning party
people! Is that an
Hermès tie? Wow, your
suit probably costs
more than I got in
grant funding
last round!





A large comic book panel showing Spider-Man and Doctor Strange standing on a golden, ornate platform that floats above a glowing blue and yellow globe. The globe is surrounded by stylized white and yellow waves. The background is a dark space filled with stars and a complex network of red, vine-like energy lines. Doctor Strange is on the left, reaching up with his right hand towards a glowing blue circular portal in the sky. Spider-Man is on the right, looking up at the portal. The entire scene is framed by large, colorful, abstract shapes in shades of green, yellow, and red.

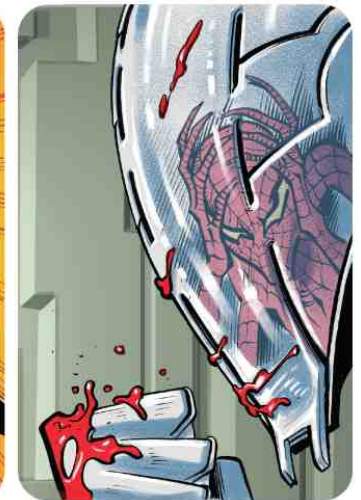
Your rock
came from the
other side of that
point. The sequence is
everywhere and everything.
It connects to the
symmetry of the
Multiverse.

It holds all
the knowledge
from the other
side, just as a quark
is the building
block of our
universe.

A smaller comic book panel with a solid red background. On the left, Doctor Strange is shown from the waist up, wearing his white robe and red-rimmed glasses. He is looking towards the right. On the right, Spider-Man is shown from the chest up, wearing his red and blue suit. He is looking towards the left. Between them, a small, dark, rock-like object is floating in the air. The background is filled with faint, red, vine-like patterns.

But
this rock has
a *sickness*
inside...

...and this
sickness is
desperate to
be free.





NEXT: DEADLY NEIGHBORHOOD
SPIDER-MAN #3



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